

Salvation Is from the Lord
Jonah 1:17-2:10
June 26th, 2022

1. _____ from an unusual location (1:17-2:2)

2. _____ to the point of death (2:3-6a)

3. _____ that salvation is from the Lord (2:6b-10)

4. Jonah offers hope:
 - a. You can cry to God in the middle of _____, even if it is your fault.
 - b. Your growth will probably not be a _____ of progress.
 - c. Salvation is from the _____.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on Jonah 1:17-2:10

1. When someone is in emotional, spiritual, or physical distress, what are some positive and negative ways they can handle that? For the Christian, how does Jonah demonstrate the first response that should become instinctive when we are in distress?
2. Why are we often hesitant to cry out to the Lord if we think the distress is our own fault? What are we assuming about God in that moment of hesitation? How does Hebrews 4:15-16 address those assumptions?
3. What parallels do you notice between Psalm 18:3-6 and Jonah's prayer in chapter 2?
4. Have you ever had a spiritual turning point in life when you were at a low point? If so, how was it similar to Jonah's prayer in chapter 2?
5. How do the following passages describe the salvation of the Lord? Who is being saved? From what are they being saved?
 - a. Genesis 49:18
 - b. Exodus 15:2
 - c. 1 Samuel 2:1
 - d. 1 Thessalonians 4:9
6. Why might someone argue that the phrase "Salvation is from the Lord" is a great summary of the Bible?
7. If you have multiple translations of the Bible, read Jonah 2:8 in multiple versions. What differences do you notice? What appears to be the key idea of the verse?

Salvation Is from the Lord

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Big idea: At the bottom of the ocean, Jonah learns that salvation is from the Lord. We must learn the same at the bottom of our weakness and sin.

Intro:

Where do you turn when you are in distress? When you are in despair?

Entertainment and distraction? Another click of Netflix, another group of friends, endless scrolling on your phone

Food and alcohol? Sweet carbs, enough to drink to help you forget for a while

In Jonah 2 we have a portrait of a man in distress. And we have an example of what we can do in our distress.

It's not exhaustive – life is complicated and there's times that you need counsel, you need to see a doctor, you need friends who hold you up, you need exercise, and on and on.

But it puts a finger on what we need most when we are in distress. It describes our first course of action, whatever our 2nd and 3rd steps are.

1. **Praying** from an unusual location (1:17-2:2)

- a. For some, this is when they check out of the story of Jonah. It seems like a fairy tale – how can someone survive in a fish?
 - i. There are stories about people being swallowed by large fish and then being spit out or one large fish that was cut open and a man was found inside still alive.
 - ii. There are studies about how much air is available inside a whale, how long could someone breath in there, is there enough room.
 - iii. All of that makes this plausible, although there are reasons to doubt some of the more famous stories of someone getting swallowed by a fish and surviving.
 - iv. But if God can do other miracles recorded in scripture – splitting the water at the Red Sea (reversing gravity), healing the blind (reconnecting neurons, refashioning retinas), raising Jesus from the dead (jump starting every dead cell in His body, every inactive synapse in His brain) – we shouldn't wince at this miracle. But we also shouldn't get distracted by it. Center stage is not Jonah's encounter with a sea creature but Jonah's encounter with God.
 - v. "Men have been looking so hard at the great fish that they have failed to see the great God." — G. Campbell Morgan on Jonah
 - vi. This never claims to be a natural occurrence – The Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah and He commanded Him to spit him out three days later.
 - vii. Is it unusual? Yes. Should you plan on this if you're in the ocean as a back up plan? Of course not. It's not meant to be seen as normative. But it is described as real and Jesus Himself described Jonah as a real person who spent three days and nights in the belly of a sea creature.
 1. **Matthew 12:39-40** But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth
- b. Was the fish possibly a whale? Does the word allow that or disallow that?

- i. “The word translated “fish” can refer to a sea creature in general. It appears that sperm whales and great white sharks, both of which can be found in the Mediterranean, can grow to sufficient size to swallow a human.” See Thomas H. Lineaweaver III and Richard H. Backus, *The Natural History of Sharks* (New York: Nick Lyons Books/Schocken, 1984), 34, 109–111.
- c. But this section begins with Jonah praying from this unique location.
 - i. Ever noticed that someone who has had a really unique experience may bring it up conversationally whenever possible. “When I was in Jerusalem...The semester I was in Paris...” Is that what Jonah is doing? Would he struggle with that for the rest of his life? “Man, it’s so dark tonight. Reminds me of the time I spent three days in the belly of a fish.”
 - ii. Not merely after he was rescued from the fish but while in the fish
 - 1. In his distress he calls out – while in distress.
 - 2. **Psalm 18:3-6** I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, And I am saved from my enemies.⁴ The cords of death encompassed me, And the torrents of ungodliness terrified me.⁵ The cords of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me.⁶ In my distress I called upon the LORD, And cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.
 - iii. Why is Jonah in distress?
 - 1. Not “what” is his distress – that’s obvious, he’s in the ocean and has been swallowed by a sea creature. By *why* is he in this predicament?
 - 2. It’s because of his own choices.
 - 3. Does he then conclude, “God doesn’t want to hear from me. This is my fault. I’m miserable and drowning and everything smells like fish, God wouldn’t want to hear from me.”
 - 4. No, he calls out to God in the middle of his distress.
 - 5. You can call out to God in the middle of your distress, even if it is a distress of your own making. I think we need to hear that sometimes. We may feel more free to cry to God when the distress is not of our own making – it’s a cancer diagnosis, it’s the tragic death of someone we love, it’s a crime against us when we’re the innocent victim.
 - a. But what about when we know that we’ve done wrong and we are reaping what we have sown? That’s Jonah. And he cries to God in the middle of his distress.

2. **Descending** to the point of death (2:3-6a)

- a. He then describes descending to the point of death before the sea creature swallowed him.
 - i. It’s richly poetic and profound.
 - ii. Sheol is a term for the place of the dead – it’s not a technical term for hell, but rather a reference to death.
- b. YOU cast me into the deep (v. 3a)
 - i. Who cast him? In ch 1, it’s clear that it’s the sailors. But here he says it was God!
 - 1. The sailors were the agents, but it was God who cast him into the sea.
 - 2. Secondary and primary causes – God was the primary cause, the sailors were only secondary.
 - ii. This is the language of a repentant person –
 - iii. He could have said – those sailors did this to me – but he recognizes God’s hand.

- iv. Just like there's a turning point when someone stops blaming their coworkers, blaming their wife, blaming others and recognizing God's hand in the consequences they experience that are used for good to open their eyes.
- c. What he describes is a very near-death experience of drowning.
 - i. He describes being engulfed, waves passing over, weeds wrapped around his head, down to the bases of the mountains
 - ii. What do you picture when Jonah is thrown overboard?
 - 1. Do you picture them tossing him right into the mouth of the sea creature?
 - 2. PICS from children's books
 - iii. What is described here is far more terrifying.
 - 1. He's not immediately scooped up.
 - 2. He's brought to the point of death (v. 5)
 - 3. Weeds were wrapping around his head (v. 5b)
 - 4. He was down at the bottom – at the roots of the mounts.
 - iv. What are the bars?
 - 1. Ancient tradition that when someone went down to sheol there were bars that closed around them so they couldn't get out.
 - 2. Also, likely play on words as the Hebrew as in English has a double meaning for bars – bars of iron like on a jail and sand bars at the bottom of the ocean.
 - v. Why would he say they were around him forever?
 - 1. He was convinced that he was at his end
 - 2. Then it turns part way through v. 6 – “But...You have brought up my life from the pit.”
- d. Isn't that common when someone is at their lowest, that the Lord meets them there?
 - i. He says in v. 4 – “I have been expelled from Your sight.”
 - ii. What did he want? To run from the presence of the Lord. When he got it, he realized that isn't what he wanted at all!
 - iii. For Joni Eareckson Tada, her low point was when she was lying in a hospital bed paralyzed after a diving accident in her teens.
 - iv. For Chuck Colson, his low point was when he was 37 years old, former Marine, lawyer, and he was special counsel to the President of the United States. He helps the president win reelection and is riding that success but feeling empty, unsatisfied, and then life unraveled more when his role in Watergate came to light and he spent 7 months in prison. One magazine described him as Nixon's “hard man, the ‘evil genius’ of an evil administration.” In the middle of all of that, a friend came to his home and read to him a portion of *Mere Christianity* from CS Lewis about pride and he was cut. He surrendered to the Lord, “I'm yours, whatever that means.” What unfolded was time in prison, then a prison ministry that reached tens of thousands over decades. There's a clip after he has been sentenced and is walking out of the courtroom saying, “I have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. I can serve Him in prison, or out of prison.”

3. **Recognizing** that salvation is from the Lord (2:6b-10)

- a. But ... a key turning point, a key pivot – but God rescued him!

- b. While I was fainting away, I remembered the Lord.
 - i. That's what we want for young men and women in this body if they wander.
 - 1. We don't want you to wander, of course. We don't want you to experience the wreckage that comes in life lived apart from God.
 - 2. But, if you wander, and life beats you about the head, we want you to remember the Lord and call upon Him in your distress, because God hears. You can cry out to God in the middle of distress – when you're in the rubble of a broken relationship, when you're spending a night in jail.
- c. His prayer came to the Lord in the temple.
 - i. Why mention the temple?
 - 1. The Lord fills the heavens and the earth. He pursues Jonah in the deep of the sea.
 - 2. God's mercy was uniquely focused and expressed in His temple.
 - a. **Exodus 25:21-22** "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. ²² "There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.
 - b. Under the mercy seat was the 10 commandments. It was a depiction of the perfect moral standard we were to keep. The law condemns us because we fail to keep it.
 - c. But on the day of atonement the priest would take the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkle it on the mercy seat as an offering for the sin of the people. (Lev. 16:14-15)
 - d. What the temple declared is that we're sinners, unable to save ourselves, and a costly sacrifice must be made on our behalf.
 - e. After centuries of practice, the fulfillment came in Jesus as the once for all time sacrifice.
 - f. We wouldn't look to the temple, but we look to the cross.
 - 3. The temple pictures what Jonah declared in v. 9 – Salvation is from the Lord.
 - a. It's been suggested that if you were to choose one verse, one phrase, from the Bible to summarize the Bible, "salvation is from the Lord" would be a good choice.
 - i. We need salvation – the storyline of scripture shows that from the disobedience of Adam and Eve to our own inability to get it right.
 - ii. We can't save ourselves - Salvation is not from men. We don't and we can't save ourselves. Not even a little bit. It's not that he does 90% of the saving and we have to do the rest. Salvation is from the Lord.
 - iii. But salvation is FROM THE LORD –
 - 1. Rescuing the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt
 - 2. Defeating overwhelming armies
 - 3. Covering sins with a sacrifice

4. Coming down Himself in the incarnation as the way, the truth, and the life.
5. Drawing people to Himself. Breathing new life into them. Holding them tight until the day they are with Him.

4. Salvation is from the Lord – and ONLY from the Lord.

- a. V. 8 provides the contrast to v. 9
- b. The ESV puts it a little more clearly than the NASB.
- c. ^{ESV} **Jonah 2:8** Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.
- d. It isn't an idol that will save. If we cling to idols, we forsake our only hope of steadfast love.
- e. Who is the intended audience for this statement?
 - i. Not the sailors from chapter 1.
 - ii. The people of Israel reading the words of the prophet Jonah written down for them, tempted to go to the idols of the other nations rather than cling to the faithful love of God.
 - iii. Of course that danger is real for us also – salvation is from the Lord – He is where we find steadfast love – not money, being Instagram famous, or having all the right stuff.

d. And Jonah was vomited back up onto dry land. (v. 10)

- i. Again, I don't think children's storybook bibles do justice to how messy this would have been. But he was back on dry land! And in chapter 3 he obeys and goes to Nineveh.
- ii. It would be great if this chapter was a complete and total turning point. Jonah is now obedient and compassionate never to struggle again! But that isn't quite what happens. He does obey in chapter 3. But he also sulks in chapter 4 and is rebuked again by God. And the book ends with uncertainty about what happens next.
- iii. Not like a perfect "V" shape where he goes down and then back up but much more like a squiggly up and down line.

4. Jonah offers hope:

- a. You can cry to God in the middle of **distress**, even if it is your fault.
- b. Your growth will probably not be a **straight line** of progress.
- c. Salvation is from the **Lord**.
 - i. Your salvation is from the Lord.
 - ii. Your neighbor's salvation is from the Lord.
 1. And yet, just like Jonah needed to go to Nineveh, so the Lord is sending you to the people in your life.
 2. He is the one who saves – the pressure is off.
 3. But He has chosen to use us – the privilege is ours.
 4. Invest, engage, explain, invite



1

1. *Praying* from an unusual location (1:17-2:2)

2

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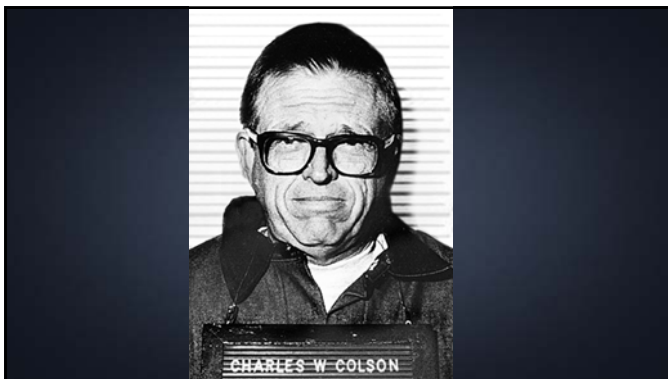
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5



6



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 - i. Your salvation is from the Lord.
 - ii. Your neighbor's salvation is from the Lord.
 1. And yet, just like Jonah needed to go to Nineveh, so the Lord is sending you to the people in your life.
 2. He is the one who saves – the pressure is off.
 3. But He has chosen to use us – the privilege is ours.
 4. Invest, engage, explain, invite



1

1. *Praying* from an unusual location (1:17-2:2)

2

Matthew 12:39-40 But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; ⁴⁰ for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth

3

2. *Descending* to the point of death (2:3-6a)

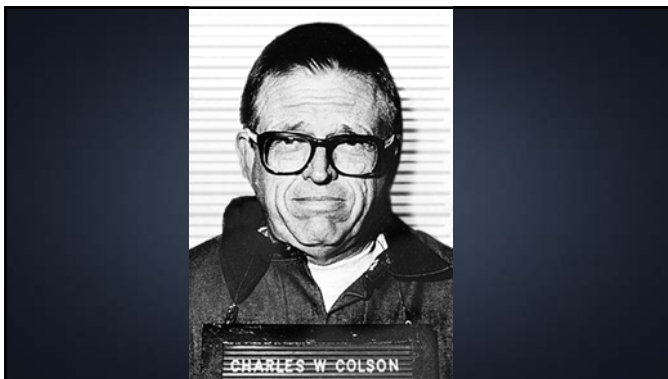
4



5



6



7

3. Recognizing that
salvation is from the
Lord (2:6b-10)

8

Exodus 25:21-22 "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I will give to you. ²² "There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.

9

^{ESV} **Jonah 2:8** Those who pay regard to vain idols forsake their hope of steadfast love.

10

a. You can cry to God in the middle of **distress**, even if it is your fault.

11

b. Your growth will probably not be a **straight line** of progress.

12

c. Salvation is from
the *Lord*.